

Things You Can Do To Start the Lean Journey

Lean is a management philosophy and tool set that is based on defining value from the customers' perspective; respect for people; standardized and balanced work; visual controls; and continuous improvement. There are many steps that can start your lean journey.

Take a look -- learn more

1. **Read** an article or book from the county's Lean Bibliography (in the online tool kit at www.kingcounty.gov/employees/lean).
2. **Browse** the website of another government that has gone Lean. There is a list in the bibliography in the online tool kit.
3. **Visit/tour** some lean companies with your team.

Dip your toes in – begin the culture change

4. **Institute the morning huddle.** Take 15 minutes at the beginning of every day to huddle as a team. Check in on everyone goals for the day and check back at the end to see how they did and if they need help.
5. **Manage by walking around.** Get out of your office to see and speak with employees about work they are doing. Leave your desk for 15 minutes every day solely for the purpose of learning more about each of your team. Take different routes to and from your office so as to be able to interact with different people.
6. **Praise publicly, coach privately.** Think of mistakes as opportunities for learning and coach. Help employees learn from their mistakes and share their learnings with others. Don't reprimand employees for making mistakes in front of others, seize the coaching opportunity.
7. **Celebrate success.** Simple, timely and spontaneous celebration is better than waiting to maybe do something later. Provide small unexpected rewards.
8. **Praise good work.** Look for opportunities to praise good work. Leave someone a thank you voice mail without going into other work topics. Send someone a positive e-mail and copy theirs by forwarding e-mails, take time at the end of the day to think about whose performance stood out in a positive way and leave thank you notes on people's desks as you leave. Always be sincere.
9. **Provide quality time.** Quality Time means giving someone your full, focused, undivided attention. Plan one-on-one meetings where you go on a walk to get away from the office and minimize distractions. Practice active listening techniques. Turn off your cell phone and pay attention to the person speaking. Don't check your email when meeting with someone in your office.
10. **Take time to reflect and look at the big picture.** Create time and a place for you and your workgroup to "Get on the Balcony." Stop dancing and take time to step back and reflect on the high-level view of things.

Jump In – Practice lean thinking or launch a lean event

11. **Learn about change.** Read an article about change management (activities that help people transition through change effectively) from the county's Lean Bibliography (in the online tool kit at www.kingcounty.gov/employees/lean).
12. **Get your group ready for change.** In a Lean organization the traditional manager's role will transition into that of a change agent--- one who is continuously striving for improvement and driving the change in the organization. Take the Front-Runners training to learn more about change management (contact your supervisor to request attendance), or schedule a presentation on change management geared to your workgroup (contact Stephanie Bell stephanie.bell@kingcounty.gov).
13. **Get to the root cause.** Don't jump to the first solution that comes to mind. Take time to move beyond the symptoms and find the root cause of problems. Ask "why", and then ask "why" again and again until you understand the problem, then move forward with a countermeasure.
14. **Make your work visible.** Find ways to make your work visible so you can see when working is backing up. It can be scary, but visible work processes are work process that can be improved. Visible work has an amazingly positive impact on team work.
15. **Understand your products and customers.** Develop a keen understanding of the products you produce or the services you deliver, and the customer for each. Talk to your customers and find out what is important to them. Look at what you do, and figure out what doesn't add value from the customers' perspective.
16. **Launch a lean event.** To launch a lean event use materials in the county's Lean Tool Kit to choose the best process to start with.
 - a. You can use the charter template to **apply for county resources** to support your Lean event. Contact Chris Reh (christopher.reh@kingcounty.gov) for more information.
 - b. You can work with your department leadership to see if resources are available to **hire an outside consultant**. The county will have a pre-approved roster of Lean consultants ready in November 2011 to shortcut the procurement process.